



HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE DANE EAGLE, MAJORITY LEADER

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Business & Professions Subcommittee Met to Discuss Occupational Licensing

Last week, the Business & Professions Subcommittee received an update on Governor Ron Desantis' "Florida Deregathon" from DBPR Secretary Halsey Beshears.

On January 31, Governor Ron Desantis invited members of Florida's professional licensing boards to join him for the "Florida Deregathon," an event which aimed to address the burdens of occupational licensing on lower income workers and aspiring entrepreneurs. The committee received an update on about 80 recommendations from the 17 boards on the ways Florida can roll back regulations in their industries. I was encouraged by what the presentation showed and I look forward to exploring what we as a House can do to get more Floridians into the workforce.

The next presentation, by the Institute for Justice, revealed some surprising statistics. For example, according to the Institute for Justice, Florida has the 21st worst licensing regime in the nation; Florida's licensing requirements for lower income workers are the 5th most burdensome in the nation; and Florida's licensing laws prevent the creation of 130,000 jobs in Florida, a disproportionate percentage of which are from lower income communities.

In my view, these figures underline the importance of deregulation in our state and I fully support any measure that removes unnecessary government barriers, allows businesses to grow more easily, and will create more job opportunities for Floridians.

Florida Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarship Program Study Highlights Success

The FTC Scholarship Program expands educational opportunities for children of families with limited financial resources by offering scholarships to help students achieve a better education.

According to a new study by the Urban Institute, the lower-income, mostly minority students using the FTC Scholarship Program to attend private schools are up to 43 percent more likely to enroll in four-year colleges than like students in public schools, and up to 20 percent more likely to earn bachelor's degrees.

I believe this study speaks volumes to the effectiveness of the FTC Scholarship Program and its mission to ensure that all students, no matter their background, have the opportunity to reach their full academic potential.



Florida House Health Market Reform Subcommittee Reviewed Certificate of Need Program

Last week, the Florida House Health Market Reform Subcommittee received an update on the current state of the Certificate of Need (CON) Program by Molly McKinstry, Deputy Secretary for the Agency for Health Care Administration.

The CON program, administered by the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), requires certain health care providers to obtain state approval before entering the market or offering certain new or expanded services. The CON program currently halts the creation of new hospitals, nursing homes, hospices, and intermediate care facilities for the developmentally disabled. These market-entry barriers prevent or delay innovation and they incentivize competitors to push each other out of the market with lawsuits rather than competing based on quality.

Additionally, the Subcommittee heard a presentation by Matthew Mitchell, PhD, Senior Research Fellow with the Mercatus Center. His presentation outlined lessons from three decades worth of research on the effectiveness of the CON program to improve healthcare access and quality. The findings are damning for CON; limited supply of dialysis clinics, limited supply of hospice care, fewer hospitals per capita, fewer hospital beds per capita, fewer hospitals with MRIs, fewer CT, MRI, PET scans, more out-of-country CT, MRI, and PET scans. The CON program limits health care access.

Furthermore, it is estimated that the number of Florida Hospitals would go from 248 with CON to 352 without CON and the number of rural Florida hospitals would go from 21 with CON to 30 without CON. That is what expanded healthcare access looks like. It is time we end Florida's failed CON program.

After decades of research and review, it is clear, Florida's CON program limits access to care and subsequently increases costs for Floridians. I look forward to supporting legislation that puts patient access first and finally eliminates CON.

Civil Justice Subcommittee Discussed Property Insurance Assignment of Benefits

Last week, the Civil Justice Subcommittee discussed issues associated with assignment of benefits under property insurance policies.

An assignment of benefits (AOB) is a legal tool that allows a contractor, repair person, or other vendor to "stand in the shoes" of a property owner and receive the benefits under a property insurance policy for repairs to the covered property. For example, when homeowners experience water damage and contact a repair person for assistance, the repair person may have the homeowner execute an AOB so work can begin immediately and the repair person can seek payment directly from the insurance company. Since 2006, the number of lawsuits involving AOBs has skyrocketed, generally resulting in higher payouts and litigation costs. These increased costs are ultimately paid for by consumers as higher insurance premiums. The committee discussed ideas to protect consumers and reduce litigation associated with AOBs.

I will continue to follow this issue and will support any legislation that protects consumers and will help reduce property insurance premiums.



Education Committee talked Career and Technical Education

Last week, the Education Committee heard presentations from the Foundation for Excellence in Education and the Florida Department of Education (DOE), and held a panel discussion on career and technical education (CTE).

The presentation from the Foundation for Excellence in Education highlighted the many workforce needs in our state and how these gaps can be filled by CTE. For example, around the nation, many industries currently have a shortage of workers. These industries include manufacturing, cybersecurity, nursing, welding, and software engineers. These careers can offer lifelong employment and career advancement for our students who participate in CTE. While Florida's CTE programs are on the right track, the foundation recommended Florida concentrate on high-demand, high-quality pathways that reflect our state's economy and provide funding of programs that can help schools close the skills gap.

The committee also heard from several school district employees from around the state and discussed how CTE programs have helped their communities. For example, CTE programs offered in their districts have helped improve graduation rates and give students the skills necessary to enter the workforce. Their testimony is a reminder of how important CTE is to the success of our state.

There was also a presentation from the DOE that centered around the importance of postsecondary attainment. Currently, Florida ranks #24 in educational attainment beyond high school. Our goal is for Florida to be #1. This goal does not have a one-size fits all solution and the Florida House realizes the need for as many career pathways as possible for our students.

I believe through these programs, Florida is able to give all students a pathway to achieve their goals and pursue a better life. I support any measure that gives opportunities for our citizens to become successful members of our workforce, and I believe career and technical education is vital to the state's economy.

Florida House Health Market Reform Subcommittee Examines Ambulatory Surgical Centers

Last week, the Florida House Health Market Reform Subcommittee received an update on the current state of Ambulatory Surgical Centers (ASCs) by Megan Smirnoff, Chief Legislative Analyst for the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA).

In Florida, ASCs are not part of a hospital and provide same-day elective surgical care. The Agency for Healthcare Administration (ACHA) licenses and regulates ASCs under the same regulatory framework as hospitals. Not only do ASCs (average charge \$6,208) handle 16% more patients than hospital outpatient surgery departments (HOPD), but they still manage to charge three times less than HOPD (average charge \$23,951). ASCs outperform traditional hospital outpatient surgery departments in key areas.

Additionally, in 2015, OPPAGA conducted an ASCs research and literature review which included 30 studies. Seven studies found ASCs had minimal impact on hospitals and hospitals reported overall lower growth rates in outpatient surgery volumes, thus lowering the burden on hospitals. Five studies suggested ASCs save money on performing certain low-risk procedures. The review also noted ASCs were more likely



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to serve older patients, benefit healthier patients than HOPDs, and provide more timely service and lower rates of unexpected safety events. ASCs achieve better access to care and quality with lower cost to patients.

Your Florida House is dedicated to passing legislation that will increase access to quality and affordable healthcare for all Floridians.

Public Integrity & Ethics Committee Provided Update on UCF Investigation

Last week the Public Integrity & Ethics Committee gave an update on the on-going investigation of the University of Central Florida's (UCF) misuse of taxpayer's money. The committee has been investigating the broader issues of misused state funds since September when the State Auditor's Office found \$38 million in Education and General (E&G) carry forward funds had been misused for the construction the new Trevor Colbourn Hall building on UCF's campus. Further audit reports have confirmed that the university misused and misconstrued the use of E&G carry forward funds.

E&G funds are appropriated by the Legislature to be used as operational funds with uses including general operation, research, operation and maintenance of facilities and infrastructure, student services, libraries, administrative support, and other operational activities. E&G money is not allowed to be used for fix capital outlay projects, like the Trevor Colbourn building at UCF.

In more recent events, the committee and the University Board of Governors (BOG) discovered that an additional \$45.6 million E&G money was funneled into other funds at UCF to be used for future fixed capital outlay projects. While this money has been frozen, and will not be spent on these future projects, the committee deemed it necessary to investigate further into the events that have taken place within UCF's administration. The committee used their subpoena powers to vote on and pass a motion to subpoena the main actors involved in this on-going investigation.

It is paramount for our duties as elected members of the Florida House of Representatives to guard the public trust in our members, state, and all the agencies, institutions, elected bodies and officials that make up our state. In this case, we are called together to see if one of our institutions violated that trust. As stewards of our taxpayer's money, we will continue this investigation and take the proper steps moving forward to ensure that the taxpayers get the answers they deserve.

Higher Education & Career Readiness Subcommittee Met to Discuss Talent Development

Last Thursday, the Higher Education & Career Readiness subcommittee discussed how to leverage statewide activities to create a systematic approach to talent development and ensure that Florida's workforce is trained to meet the changing needs of our economy.

The presenters included individuals from the Lumina Foundation, the Florida Chamber Foundation, CareerSource Florida, Inc., the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, and the Florida College Access Network.



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Florida is a diverse state and the economic challenges that face the panhandle are very different from those in South Florida. With these challenges come different solutions to help close the skills gaps in their areas and make sure those entering the workforce are prepared. The robust conversation provided information on what we are currently doing and outlined strategies that could further improve Florida's talent development and help close those gaps.

I was encouraged by the information provided by the presenters and I believe our state can develop a comprehensive plan to achieve its goal of increasing the number of working adults with a meaningful high-value credential beyond high school.